

善子・花丸・ルビイ編

公野櫻子

イラスト+伊能津／清瀬赤目

ラブライブ!
School idol diary
★サコシナイン!!



Tsushima Yoshiko / Kunikida Hanamaru / Kurosawa Ruby

Love Live! Sunshine!! School Idol Diary
Aqours' Sea Side Diary

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04 - Yoshiko Tsushima

My Raison D'Etre

I've had bad luck ever since I was a kid.

Really bad luck.

Why?

Well... Don't ask me!

To tell the truth, I wish I could be lucky too.

I mean, there's always someone like that in class, right?

In bingo competitions, they're always the first to shout, "Bingo!" When everyone's playing rock-paper-scissors to see who gets to eat the extra desserts, they somehow always win, and happily help themselves to a second pudding... and despite that, they're still super thin.

Plus, those kinds of people always have a cute face and a nice personality, making them popular with their classmates.

Ugh, come on!

I get upset just thinking about it.

Don't they make you jealous!?

And then, if you look at me in comparison...

Ever since I was a kid, it would always start raining in the middle of the day on sports day.

When it's time for a field trip, a typhoon comes in.

When I go digging for potatoes, it's the worst harvest in several years.

On picture day for the graduation album, I get sick with influenza.

When they're handing out packs of candies at the kids' festivals, mine always has the least stuff in it, and when we're assigned roles in the marching band, of course I get the only broken keyboard.

And, you could say my bad luck was already set in stone from the very moment I was born in this rural corner of the east coast.

Don't you agree?

I mean, even if I do say so myself, I've got it pretty good in the looks department, and I'm decently smart, and I've got good aesthetic sense. People tell me that a lot, but frankly, I'm a pretty sharp girl♥

If I were born in Tokyo, I'm sure I'd live a fashionable life, strutting through the streets of Harajuku, Shibuya, and Omotesando every day, and I could definitely become an amateur model.

No, not just that, I might even get scouted for real and become one of those famous schoolgirls who appear on TV and stuff. Or is that going too far?

Hehe♥

...

But that's out of the question...

Before I knew it, I'm here in a backwoods high school with only one class of students per year (and it's a girls' school!!!), and all I do every day is go to school, and then go home.

And, the road to school doesn't have any fashion stores or trendy cafes, or even a single fast food store.

I do go to Numazu and Mishima stations on my free days, though...

But that's probably not the sort of trendiness I'm looking for.

Someone tell me, where in the world are those trendy cities and shops that are all over TV, magazines, and the net!?

Maybe they're all illusions.

Yeah, that's right. Those are all visions of an alternate dimension, with no relation to the world I live in. Probably.

Nah, not really.

Yeah, I'm fully aware I'm only saying that because of sour grapes!

Hmph.

I must have thought about this a million times or so.

Why?

Why am I the only one who's so unlucky?

When I was in fourth grade, I saved up my allowance and bought a miniskirt from a clothes store at the train station for the first time.

I was so happy. So happy, I couldn't bring myself to wear it, and just hung it up in my room for a while.

The first time I wore it, I immediately fell over and heard the fabric rip.

When I started middle school, I figured I'd sneak away from home and go to Tokyo, but the when I got on the Tokaido line, the train broke down at Atami, and I had no choice but to trudge home.

I've bought talismans, and done purifications.

I always watch the horoscope on morning TV, and I always try my best to get the lucky items and follow their advice.

I've tried everything there is to try.

But, all I've figured out is that none of it works.

So, I thought of something.

I must be a demon♥

Yep.

That's gotta be it♥♥



I mean, now that I've mentioned it, you think so too, don't you?

Otherwise, nothing could explain how terrible my luck is.

Wow, I'm such a genius!

If that's the case, then it's only natural that I'd have terrible luck, right?

I'm a demon, after all.

Demons are messengers of the underworld, sent to raise hell in the world of the living.

Then, wouldn't my unluckiness actually mean I'm a really powerful demon?

Heheh♥

Yeah, that must be the answer!

That's gotta be it!

I'm the adorable little demon Yohane.

So, call me the fallen angel Yohane from now on, alright?

Sheesh, it's all so obvious once you have it figured out♥

As a demon, no matter how many unlucky events happen around me,
I'll just consider it proof of my strength as a demon.

I'll live with my head held high!

Even when it rains on sports days, don't blame it on Yoshiko while my
back's turned!

We'll all go to hell together♪



Demonic Temptation ♪

It was on an afternoon someday.

I had hoped that I could at least spend my high school years at a fancy school in the big city, but that was mercilessly crushed, like the fleeting dream it was.

I'd be attending Uranohoshi Girls' Academy in Uchiura, starting April.

There goes the high school life I'd been waiting for, and to make things worse, there's nowhere for me to stop on the way home, either!

'Cause all there is to find around Ura High are sea, mountains, skies, and bugs.

From the hilltop where that school is, there's only mandarin orchards as far as the eye can see.

Ugh.

I find myself in a heavy, cloudy mood every day.

Not that I had my hopes set too high after finding out I'd be going to Ura High, though.

At this point, I feel more like I'm sliding back into elementary school than starting high school.

All my classmates are playing ball in the courtyard during midday break.

With only one class of students per year, all my classmates are local girls who all attended the same school. Nearly all of them have known each other since preschool.

On the way home from school, they stop at the nearby convenience store, although “nearby” in this case is still a 30-minute walk away.

The reason being that, out of the two convenience stores they have around here, that one apparently sells the better soft serve.

After walking for 30 minutes, they stand at the edge of the parking lot and chat over their ice creams.

When evening comes, the sea breeze stops blowing, and the sea grows calm, that means it's time to go home.

The speakers at the town hall start to play *Goin' Home* .

Oh, come on!

I never wanted my life to stay like this all the way through high school!

So, I'm alone again today.

I don't join the girls playing in the courtyard, and before anyone gets a chance to invite me to the convenience store, I quickly leave school on my own.

Well, with nothing around here but the sea, the mountains, the sun, and the clouds, I'll admit the scenery here can't be beat.

Every day, you can see Mt. Fuji through the clear, shining skies.

I think it's fun to enjoy the aquarium or the greenery of Awashima every once in a while, too.

But, if that were every single day of your life...

Well, that would be absolute hell for a stylish, demonic high school girl like myself.

Oh, whoops, hell would be the best place for me, the fallen angel Yohane, to be...

So instead, this place is heaven♪

...

Hmmm, that doesn't really sound right, either...



Oh well.

Regardless, the seas and hills of Uchiura, and Mt. Fuji, do look beautiful from the school window.

The rays of sun peeking through gaps in the clouds look like ladders for the angels.

For a moment, in this golden light, it really does look like heaven. I'm almost starting to get visions of heaven just looking at it.

Oh no, has God forgiven the fallen angel Yohane and welcomed her back to Heaven?

I'll have to make the angelic wings I'm constructing white instead of black, then♪

No, now's not the time for that.

As I stand at the shoe rack in the entrance hall, beneath the large stained glass window, I'm starting to think strange things.

Ura High is a long-standing mission school, and this stained glass window that welcomes the students through the main entrance is covered with angels flying serenely.

I might be more impressionable than I thought.

It's starting to work its influence on me. No, stop that.

I am Yohane.

Having rejected the saccharinity of heaven, I willingly became a demon and fell from grace, into the world of darkness.

I mumble to myself as I open the shoe rack door and reach in to take my shoes.

"Hello, would you like to become a school idol?"

"I'm starting a school idol club at Ura High! Let's dance together, it'll be fun♪"

"We're gonna become school idols and shine across the world, just like μ's!"

I suddenly hear something.

What sort of shady scouting agency is out there!?

Frowning, I turn around to discover a second-year student, wearing the Ura High uniform.

She's carrying a stack of flyers, about A4-sized, and standing in front of the door, just outside the entrance hall and its rows of shoe racks. It seems she's handing them out to anyone passing by.

Was a school event happening?

I'm pretty sure the schedule they handed out during the entrance ceremony listed just a few things for April: the entrance ceremony, new students' guidance, and Easter.

Oh, then what about May?

I haven't looked over next month's events. How foolish of me.

But still, idols?

What's that all about?

I just can't ignore this.

I quietly approach the second-year girl from behind.

She has bright hair in a bob.

A single asymmetric braid hangs down just one side of her head, with a yellow ribbon on the end. It bounces each time she moves.

She seems to have more energy than she knows what to do with, and for a second-year student, she has a somewhat childish smile.

But, her bright attitude fits in perfectly with Ura High.

Nobody seems to be taking her flyers, but she isn't at all discouraged.

I'm only a few steps away from her now.

How should I start the conversation? I'm not so sure.

"What are you doing?"

Hm, that's not right...

"I'd like one too!"

No, I wouldn't want her to think I'm super eager about this.

"Uh, I'm new here. Is that something I'm supposed to have?"

Ugh, that sounds so argumentative! What kinda freak would say that!?

Well, I'd rather not let her see my face, but so few people around, that's obviously not happening.

And she can see I'm a first-year by the color of my tie.

Aside from that, judging by how small this school is, she'd definitely know I'm from out of town (although I just ride the bus in from Numazu).

Ugh, gimme a break!

This is the problem with underpopulated schools!

There's no anonymity here at all!!

I keep on racking my mind, but I can't just stand here forever, either (that would make me stand out even more!) With no other options, I just walk past her, and then...

"Hello, would you like to become a school idol!?"

She suddenly turns around, and, with a flowery smile, holds out a flyer to me.

On it are these words:

Recruiting school idols!

At long last, Ura High is forming a school idol unit!

Newcomers welcome!! We can make Ura High better together!

You're the brightest star in Uchiura!

The brightest star in Uchiura!?

I can barely hold in my laughter at that childish writing.

She's older than me, after all.

I resist the urge to laugh while I think of what to say.

Uh, maybe I should just say "thank you" for now?

(I'm supposed to be grateful when upperclassmen give me stuff, right?)

But wouldn't that make me seem incredibly eager?

I look down, reading over the flyer again.

School idol...

Hm.

It does feel like something that would suit me well.

After all, I'm pretty cute ♥♥

Even if I do say so myself, I think I'd be the first person they'd scout here if a recruiter came to Ura High.

It's just too bad!

I'm actually pretty busy♥

I've got schoolwork, and I pay attention to fashion, unlike the people here, so I need to travel far away to do my shopping, and I also have fallen angel stuff taking up my time.

And besides...

"It's not like anyone would show up to any school idol events in Uchiura, right?"

The words come out of my mouth before I can stop them. The second-year freezes up, but I continue. "Is there any place you could actually hold an event? Maybe the fishery co-op? But, if you actually event there, the audience would just be some old folks at best."

"W-Well, I just-

Before she gets any further, someone else shouts at her from inside the school.

"Hey, Chika! What are you doing!? You're supposed to be on cleaning duty today!" another second-year shouts, leaning out the window.

"Ack, sorry! Are we starting already!? I had to hand out the flyers before everyone left! Sorry, I'll be right there!" She shouts back, frantically waving her hand at the classroom.

Without a pause, I say, “Well, I need to go shopping at Numazu now. See you later.”

Hehehe♥

Perfect♪

Cold and indifferent, truly the image of a solitary beauty!

I'd get full score on the “out of your league” rating!

I walk away without turning back.

Undaunted, the second-year girl shouts at my back, “By the way, I’m Chika Takami, from Class 2-1! Anyway, I gotta go now, but if you ever have a change of heart, come see me anytime!”

“We welcome anyone from Ura High! We’re all beginners here, so don’t worry! Even if you’re they shy type, we can still be friends, easy! Come on, let’s all have a wonderful idol life! And then, we’ll leave an everlasting mark on Ura-“

“Chika, get over here or else we’re making you take out all the trash!”
The girl in the classroom shouts again.

“Aaaaahh! Wait, waitwaitwait! I’m coming right now!”

What a loud girl.

As I start walking again, she shouts at me again. “Come hang out with us! I’ll be waiting at the rooftop after school!”

She just keeps going.

As I walk into the distance, she keeps shouting after me.

A while after I’ve exited the school gate, I look at the flyer again and whisper, “School idols??”

I’ve heard of them before. Here and there, there are schools that do idol stuff.

Underneath the embarrassing stuff about being the brightest star, there's the words "You, too can become a legendary school idol today!" with a drawing of 9 idols dressed in cute outfits.

Hehe♥

She's not much of an artist, to be honest.

But,

For some reason,

Hm...

So, this school has them too?

I never knew.

Suddenly, I feel my chest expanding and growing lighter.

Oh my, have I finally hit my growth spurt?

I was wondering when that was gonna happen. Well, spring has come, and I'm a high schooler now, after all.

It's time for me, the demoness Yohane, to start **growing** bigger and bigger♪

Huh.

Well, hmm♥

So we have a school idol club.

They should have told me sooner, then.

Ever since elementary school, I've always thought I was unlucky, but maybe a bit of luck's finally coming my way?



A school idol club in a little girls' school in a little town, starting with a little flyer.

This is a venue that's far beneath my caliber, but that's exactly why they need an ace like me, right?

Oh, fine then. If they insist, then I suppose I could consider joining them.

And then, I, Yohane, shall take them to the ultimate hell with my dark allure!





05 – Hanamaru Kunikida

Peas in a Pod

“Ah, watch your step! There’s a pud-“ Chika calls out from behind, but by the time I hear her, it’s already too late.

My right foot comes down, making a large splash in a puddle in front of me.

Muddy water flies about, staining my white socks gray.

We’re on the rooftop, afterschool. After homeroom and cleaning, all of Aqours gathered here, one by one.

We were just about to start practice.

“Agh...” I whimper.

My white athletic shoes are soaking wet.

It’s so cold...

I almost want to cry, but Ruby says, “Oh no! Your shoes are all wet, Maru!”

With a stern face, she takes out a white lace handkerchief and tries to wipe off my shoes.

"Woah, woah, woah, woah, woah!"

Stop that, Ruby! My socks and shoes aren't worth ruining your handkerchief for!

"It's fine, Ruby. It's a sunny day. They'll dry in no time♥" I manage to say with a smile.

"Really? Well, that's great, Maru♥ And you didn't even cry, either. I fall into puddles a lot, too, but if that were me, I'd definitely start crying right away, ehehe☆" Ruby says with an embarrassed smile.

You don't really need to compliment me on that♥

I only held back the years because I was so surprised when Ruby tried to wipe me off with her handkerchief.

When you compliment me for that, it gives me a weird, kinda embarrassing, kinda happy feeling♥♥

From a bit away, I hear Yohane giggle and ask Dia, "She'd cry right away if that were her? Does Ruby really fall into puddles that often?"

With a reluctant smile, Dia responds, "Unfortunately, yes. They must not pay too much attention. But, in Hanamaru's defense, I think that's because she's always reading while she's walking. But, Ruby is simply careless, and when she does fall, the damage tends to be more severe and more widespread.

"Waaah! Sis is being mean to me again!" Ruby starts crying.

"I-It's okay, Ruby. Dia wasn't being serious" I say, holding Ruby's hand. It's very warm, just as it always is.

As I hold her hand, her hand tightens around mine, too.

Hehehe♥

It's been like this ever since we were little.



When I was little, I lived in a world full of monsters.

I was born in a temple in Uchiura.

This rural temple is big, with several old buildings and sheds, filled with those unnerving shadows that small children are so afraid of.

It felt like some giant monster could jump out at any moment.

The main hall, where the Buddha was, was always dark, silent, and empty whenever we weren't holding memorials in there.

Sometimes, I would be sent inside on my own, for errands, into that dark silence with the shadowy glimmer of the Buddha. If I looked up, among the gold-adorned ceiling, I would see a dragon painted in black ink, glaring down at me.

I would get so scared, I'd tumble out of the door, with the lingering scent of incense trailing behind me.

Surrounding the main hall were some trees, covered in thick, dark green foliage, as if prepared to ambush me the moment I jumped out.



Rustle rustle rustle .

The leaves shook loudly.

Now that I think about it, that must have been a stray cat that wandered into the temple while patrolling the town.

But, I was so scared I thought I'd die.

While my legs were shaking, the wind started howling, causing the abandoned outhouse by the main hall to start creaking.

And the air above me would start swirling about.

Aaaahh!!

I started crying, unable to take any more.

Help me, Grandma! I'm not gonna make it to the toilet!

Maybe it's because that was the environment I grew up in, but I was a very timid girl.

Scared of the little gaps behind things, scared of sudden loud noises, scared of meeting new people, and scared of the voices of rough outdoorsmen. I'd always run and hid behind someone.

I imagined anything I saw to be several times bigger than they actually were.

As if they would swallow me up if I let my guard down for even a moment. I was always afraid of that.

My parents were often out of the house, busy with temple work, so usually my grandma looked after me. Grandma was from out of town, and married the priest of the temple. She seemed to understand me, and she



would always help me out, without yelling at me.

"The Buddha of the temple is always protecting you, but also he'll punish you if you do bad things. Is that what scares you, my little one?"

She'd say, patting my head as I pressed it against her bottom through her silk kimono.

When I stood behind Grandma's kimono and white apron, I always smelt a sweet aroma.

"What are we having, today, Grandma?" I'd ask quietly, so the Buddha wouldn't think I was a greedy girl.

Then, Grandma would apologetically say, "Just potatoes again."

Hooray♥ Grandma's making candied sweet potatoes! I'd think, but out loud, I'd only say it as a whisper while looking down so nobody would see.

That way, the monsters lurking around wouldn't catch me and chomp off greedy little Maru's head.

Then, when I was four years old, I started going to Uchiura's only preschool.

It's an old preschool, but it's a one-story building, built by the beach and well-lit by the sun. During daytime, there's not even the slightest shadow anywhere inside.

Luckily enough, not even I could find anything to be afraid of at that school.

But, since I had grown up by myself in a quiet temple, I didn't like being with the rowdy boys or the loud, bossy girls there.

In the end, I ended up in the corner again.

I was always in the back of the room, sitting in the sun and reading books.

Now that I think about it, this was when I started liking books more and more.

Even when I was alone in the corner, I could enter the world inside the book, and even when I couldn't hide behind Grandma's kimono, they

helped me forget about the monsters hiding in the darkness.

In those picture books, I read about little girls the same age as me.

Although they seemed shy and cowardly at first, they got stronger and braver as the story went on. And, by the end, they would usually become a smiling heroine who could solve any problem they came across.

When I read those stories, I would get excited too.

I'd feel happy and refreshed, even though it wasn't even my story.



I wished I could become like them♥

That would happen only when I read those books.

And then, one day, we had a sleep in.

The preschool had a sleepover in May, just once a year, every year.

Even now, I can remember how much I hated it.

Ehehe♥

I just hated it so much.

I wanted to stay home so badly, my stomach started hurting several days beforehand.

But, it didn't hurt as badly as I hoped on the actual day. I was bawling before we left the house, and my mother, thinking that was normal for me, took me to school for the sleep-in.

The sleep-in began after lunch, and for a snack, we all made pancakes on electric griddles together.

Then, at night, we had a special dinner with curry and fruit punch.

I managed just fine until then, but after dinner came the movie. That's when the problems started.

It was a Disney movie, but it had to be the one with scary monsters coming out from behind doors.

It had a happy ending, and everyone else loved it.

But, as for me...

After the movie ended, we all went to sleep at the preschool, but of all places, I ended up at the end of the group.

I was too close to the door.

As I crawled into the futon, I felt like I was going to die.

I pulled my hands and feet in, curling up like a bug inside the futon.

In my mind, I kept praying, let it end, let it end, please let this sleep-in end.

The teachers said good night, and turned off the lights, and then they all left.

What should I do?

I need to go to the toilet.

But what if one of the monsters from the temple popped out of the door, like they did in the movie? I thought, and began fidgeting in the futon.

And then, I heard a voice.

"What's wrong, Maru?"

A cute and gentle voice.

But, I was on the verge of tears, unable to respond.

“Maru, Maru, are you okay? Does your tummy hurt?”

The sheets next to me started rustling. Apparently the girl got up and was now shaking me through the sheets.

Stop that, you’ll just make it worse!

“Should I call the teacher?”

I didn’t want to make the teachers come and cause a scene.

“Don’t, I’m okay, but...”

My voice must have been trembling as I talked.

“Ruby, I need to go to the toilet. Will you come with me?” I said.

Even though I was shivering inside the futon up until that point, as soon as I asked that question, I suddenly felt brave enough to sit up and throw



the covers off.

“Okay!”

As soon as I sat up, I saw her face right in front of me.

She was looking towards me with a worried look. It’s Ruby.

As soon as she saw me get up, with tears in my eyes, she gave me a happy smile.

“Let’s go♥” She said, reaching out to me.

I held her hand tightly. It was so warm.

I can still remember feeling like my body was growing lighter.

Then, we were on our way through the halls of the preschool.

But, the first step she took into the hallway, Ruby froze up and her knees started quivering.

She pressed her lips together in an attempt to endure something.

Tears started welling up in her large, round eyes.

When I saw Ruby like that, something inside me suddenly pulled itself together.

I felt courage rising up within me from somewhere.

It was dark around us, with little night lights being the only illumination in the hallway. Normally, I'd be too scared to move.

But, when I saw Ruby, it felt like a bright beam of light was falling around her.

Although the hallway should have been covered end-to-end in darkness, I thought I saw a soft, warm light just around Ruby.

I remember thinking that no monster or ghost could scare me.

We were still holding hands, and this time, I tightened my hand around hers.

“Let’s go♥”

This time, I'm the one to talk.

The tears disappear from Ruby's cute face, and she smiles, like Little Red Riding Hood from the illustrations in my picture books. Like a heroine.

Ooh! I can't look away♥

Ehehe. Just for that moment.

For that moment, it felt like Ruby and I were the main characters in one of my picture books.

That was the first time I realized I wasn't alone.

I didn't have to rely on the teachers or Grandma to protect me.

We were together.

We were a team, heading onwards in the same direction together.

I felt like we were sharing our courage with each other through our hands.

Nothing troubles or scary things could stop us as long as we were together.

One day, I'll be able to face this alone.

It might have been that on that day, a little light of courage lit up in my heart, and illuminated that hallway.



It's been ten years since that day.

But, Ruby and I are still together.

We're still holding each other's hands, the same way we did when we shared our courage on that day♥

Ruby's kept growing cuter ever since then, and I thought that she wouldn't stay with me forever, but here we are. Why is that?

Sometimes I wonder, but it might be fate that we were born in the same year, in the underpopulated town of Uchiura♥

Neither Ruby nor I are so good at saying what we're thinking.

When we need help, we reach out our hands.

Either Ruby reaches out to me, or I to her.

And when we hold hands, we become braver.

So, even when Ruby wanted to become a school idol,

I didn't hesitate to hold her hand.

So that Ruby could be brave.

And so that I could find the courage to jump in with her.



To me, school idols represent courage.

I hope that whenever we're in trouble, we'll hold each other's hands and press forward.

And, I want all the fans of Aqours to see my utmost courage.

I'm short, and bad at dancing, and I'm clumsy, and always falling into puddles, but I want to hold their hands and let them feel my warmth♥

Joining Aqours has really given me so much courage.

I want everyone to know the warmth you can feel in someone's hands, no matter how scary things get.



06 – Ruby Kurosawa

Practicing for Idolhood ♪

“Ru-by Ku-ro-sa-wa.”

I look over the paper on my desk again.

“Hmm, maybe I should let the end stick out a bit more?”

Or maybe I should write with English instead of hiragana?

It looks more slick and mature that way, and besides, my first name is written with katakana.

What a bother...

I keep trying, but I can’t figure out how to write it!

My signature.

I’ve been thinking about it all day since yesterday.

Maybe I should just talk it over with Maru and the others later?

Ehehe♥

Now that I've finally become a real school idol, first thing I gotta do is make up a signature♥

The most important thing about an idol is having a wonderful signature♪

Ahh, it's still burnt into my eyes.

You see, during Golden Week, I went with the rest of Aqours to Akihabara for the first time in my life.

When I saw the stores filled with idol CDs and merchandise, I thought my jaw was gonna fall off my face! I couldn't contain myself!!

It was like I stepped into wonderland. I was flying through the clouds. I couldn't believe what I was seeing was real.

And while I was there, I saw a section of the shop's wall covered with loads of huge posters.

Each of those posters towered about 2 meters tall. They might have been even bigger than the real thing.

And in the corner of one poster, there was an idol's signature.

"Woah! IS this a real signature!? The real and actual real deal!? Does that mean an actual idol was in this store!?" I said, incredulously. Next to me, Maru looked just as shocked was I was.

"I don't know. Would they really-"

Then, a lady from the staff who was walking by giggled and told us with a smile, "Oh, it's real. She did that for us when she had a signing event at our store."

"Wow! Wow, wow, wow! That means that an actual idol touched this poster and wrote this signature!"

As my fingertips touched the poster next to the signature, it felt like I was actually touching an actual idol.

My heart jumped.

At that moment, I felt for the first time in my life that idols actually live in the same world as the rest of us♥

It's hard to describe how I felt,

After all,

Idols, who seemed like they lived in the clouds, far beyond our wildest dreams, actually existed in our world.

An idol really touched and signed the same poster I'm touching right now. It's unbelievable. But it's so exciting!

I was beside myself, jumping around so much that everyone else started laughing.

But I couldn't help it.

It was my first-ever indirect... well, not a kiss, but an indirect touch with a real idol♥

Oh, what should I do? I wish I could take this signature home with me, but I obviously can't do that. What should I do, what should I do? I kept jumping around.

No matter how hard I tried to leave, it was like it grabbed me by the hair and pulled me back.

I ended up staying there for what seemed like forever, just admiring the signature.

I spent the entire remainder of my shopping time staring at it in that store.

But I don't regret it.

Because, it's still burned into my eyes right now.

The sight I saw on that day.

The exhilaration of touching a real idol!

Aahhh, signatures are so amazing♥

They have the power to move people so much!



“And that’s why I’ve been thinking about my signature ever since then...”

Afterschool, on the rooftop.

We’d been practicing a dance for our new song at our next concert, but since my sister had to go do student council stuff, we took a break while she was gone.

I was sitting against the fence at the edge of the roof, talking to Maru next to me. “I kept thinking and thinking, but I couldn’t come up with any good ideas, even though we saw all those incredible signatures in Akihabara... Maybe I just don’t have the talent to be an idol?” I said dejectedly.

“Oh no...” Maru starts.

“What does a signature have to do with how talented an idol is?”
Someone speaks up from a distance.

Yohane walks over. Apparently she washed her face at the faucets and is now wiping off her hair with a towel.

M-Maybe she’s right...

But, as I look at her, Yohane's fine body looks so dazzling to me that I have to shield my eyes a little.

Yohane crouches down next to me.

While she went to wash her face, she also stopped at the school's only vending machine and bought drink cartons for Maru and me.

I got a strawberry milk

Maru got orange juice.

And Yohane got... oh, black coffee.

Something I still can't stand drinking.



Then, Yohane continues with an exasperated look. "Signatures? You mean those indecipherable scribbles? I see them all the time at cafes around Numazu. Normally, you can't even tell whose signature it is unless they write it down. They're completely pointless, so just make something up that looks signature-ish and—"

"Th—that's not true! Signatures are important! Back when I was in Akihabara," I start shouting, which seems to surprise Yohane. "I... I..."

I explain how I felt back when we went to Akibahara.

I was so moved when I saw a real idol's signature.

Even if I couldn't meet them, I felt so happy to see that signature and know they lived in the same world I did.

I felt how amazing idols are, and at the same time,

If I could also become a school Idol, (well, I'm well-aware that I probably can't) I've gotta be able to bring the same sort of excitement to others.

So...

"So, even though I'm short and dumb and I have no confidence I can become an idol as amazing as that, I want to at least have an awesome signature so whoever sees it can be maybe a little bit happier." I say.

"Ruby..." Maru says, sounding excited.

And Yohane sighs, "How come you don't have more confidence?"

As I hear her mutter, I think to myself, what reason do I have to be confident?

That's impossible for me.

I'm Dia's little sister. Ever since I was a little girl, I've always been compared to her.

My calm, organized, decisive, smart, and beautiful big sister.

Ever since I started elementary school, I'd hear people say the same thing to me.

"Hi, I'm Ruby," I'd introduce myself.

"Oh, you're Dia Kurosawa's little sister? I know your sister, she's so pretty and smart and organized! And you're just like her, right? I can't wait to see what you can do!"

Just that is nearly enough to bring me to tears.

And besides...

Even from my point of view, I also think she's beautiful and smart, and she's always the class rep."

I seriously can't compare to her.

There's nothing I can do.

But because we're sisters... Just because we're sisters...

We take the same lessons at home, we wear the same clothes, and of course, we get our report cards on the same day.

I always get compared to my sister.

Nobody's ever said it out loud, but I hear what they're thinking.

"Dia's so talented, but Ruby, on the other hand..."

Even though I could never even compare to her in the first place.

I press my lips together as I think about it.

"Well, I think you've got a pretty decent shot at being an idol. Why don't you be more confident?" Yohane says, looking straight into my eyes.

I doubt my ears, but unlike her usual self, there's not even a hint of sarcasm in Yohane's voice.

When I don't respond, Yohane starts talking again. "I'm telling you, be more confident! You're honest, you're cute, and you look good in frills and ribbons, and all that idol stuff. Besides, you're the meek little sister character! That's a pretty strong point for an idol to have, you know? So be more-"

"Little sister character? What does that..." I wonder

"Oh come on, you haven't even noticed it yet? You may be cowardly, you may be clumsy, and you're definitely not ever going to be the leader of your class ever," Yohane says, smiling as she looks at my face. "But a girl that loves idols and thinks about signatures while drinking strawberry milk is relatable. What I'm saying is, you could be a more popular idol than you think♥ You already know that good grades and talent in singing and dancing alone don't make an idol, don't you?"

Well, she does have a point.

I think about all the idol groups I've seen.

To be good at singing, to be good at dancing,

To be beautiful, to have a nice body,

It's true that those aren't always the types of people that become popular idols.

They can be mediocre singers, and terrible dancers, and they don't have to be all that beautiful. But, the kind of girl that's cute and laughs a lot, who smiles like she could sit down and have a chat with you anytime, that's a type that people always pay attention to.

And all this time, I never even noticed.

Or rather, I never thought to compare them with myself.

Because I never thought my dream of becoming a school idol could come true.

That's why the only comparison I ever thought about was my sister, the perfect student, vs. me, Ruby, the absolute dunce.



"You mean there might be people out there who like my flaws?" I ask quietly.

"Yep, that's what I mean♥" Yohane says with a satisfied look on her face. "Oh, and I'll take that, if you're done with it," she says as she snatches the strawberry milk from my hands and gulps it down."

"Ack! Aaaaaahhh! My strawberry milk!"

"Thanks, that was great♥ Nothing hits the spot like some sugar after a black coffee♥"

"Waaaaaaaahh!" I shriek.

Maru looks at me with a smile and says, "Let's do our best together, Ruby! You've got more than just your signature. Anyone who sees you

will know you love idols with all your heart!"

"Thanks, Maru!"

I'm getting so emotional, I kinda feel like crying again.



"Well, I think you've got something else to worry about before you start thinking signatures, though."

"You mean dancing and singing practice?"

I'm doing my best there, of course, but Yohane just said those weren't necessarily the most important things.

"No, no♥ Well, I can understand why you'd want to start giving out signatures as soon as possible, but right now, Aqours doesn't even have any fans to sign for."

Ugh...

I can't think of anything to say.

I kinda knew that too, actually. But, as long as we put in effort for our concerts, who knows what might happen♥

When I'm doing my number-one first signature, I want to give them the best signature I can...

"And well... You know, right? Normally, when you do signatures for people, you're supposed to write them directly on people's signboards and notebooks, right?"



"Well... yeah?"

"What if it's a guy? I thought you were androphobic?"

Aaaah! She's right...

"The cute, androphobic little sister idol, and the demonic fallen angel idol who will take all her fans to hell. Who will the victor be? You'd better not miss out on this battle ♪" Yohane says. Meanwhile, my shoulders slump at the discovery of this new problem.

"Being an idol has more layers than I thought," Maru whispers.